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BOOK REVIEWS

The Bailey-Manly Spelling Book. By ELIZA R. BAILEY AND JOHN M. MANLY. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Pp. 154.

As the years go by with their new and their renovated educational theories, they seem to establish conclusively the fact that decent spelling will always be considered a matter of considerable importance. The teacher who can complacently overlook a mass of deaf, dumb, and blind orthography is fortunately rare, and is evidently not going to control the situation. Yet to many others, doubtless no problem is more baffling than that of the misspelled word, and the whole question of textbook and of method has seemed dark.

To them, as to others, this new book should be far more than interesting. It is given out as the result of several years of successful experiment in more than one school. In scope, it is more than a mere list of words; it includes a thorough course in punctuation and the use of capitals. The most important addition, however, is pointed out in the prefatory "Suggestions to Teachers": "The teacher should aim to have pupils gain the ability to use correctly all the words that they learn to spell."

As to the problem of spelling itself, it would be hard to find a discussion of the same length more practical than that in the "Suggestions," while there are interesting suggestions in the Preface. One thing worth noting is the emphasis wisely put on syllabification and distinct enunciation. Another is explained in the Preface: "The old method of bringing together in a list words spelled and pronounced alike was a mistake. The pupil who could learn such a spelling lesson perfectly was often at a loss how to spell the words correctly under the conditions of actual use. But the method now gaining currency in some quarters of entirely dissociating words containing similar elements, and treating each word as if it and its derivatives stood alone, is equally wrong, psychologically and practically. . . . The authors have tried to avoid both these errors." Another interesting feature is the use of selections of prose and poetry as exercises, in addition to correspondingly short lists of detached words. One may not be able to go far with the authors in their hope that these little scraps of quotation will create a desire for good reading, but at least they are sound and good; and they do of course attain the object of teaching the word as it is used. Finally, one great excellence is the effective gradation of the work for the different years.

Altogether the book is an application of clear intelligence and uncommon sense to a difficult and important problem, and deserves at the least careful examination.

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